

Message Text

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EXDIS

DDEPARTMENT PASS CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD AND OSD DEPT DEFENSE WASHDC

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: ANZUS, MNUC, PARM, NZ

SUBJECT: VIEWS OF PRIMIN ROWLING ON NPW VISITS AND NUCLEAR FREE ZONE

1. DEPSEC CLEMENTS, AMBASSADOR SELDEN AND DEPASSTSEC ZURHELLEN HAD HOUR LONG PRIVATE TALK WITH NZ PRIME MINISTER ROWLING EVENING MARCH 18. NO OTHER NEW ZEALANDERS PRESENT. MEETING WAS FRIENDLY BUT EXCEEDINGLY FRANK ON BOTH SIDES.

2. CLEMENTS NOTED USG HAD MOVED FAR TO ACCOMMODATE NZ AND AUSTRALIA ON QUESTION OF LIABILITY FOR NUCLEAR-PQWERED WARSHIPS (NPW) AND CONGRESS HAD PASSED NECESSARY LEGISLATION. HOPED THIS WOULD NOW ALLOW RETURN TO PRACTICE OF PERMITTING NPW VISITS. NOTED AUSTRALIAN PM WHITLAM HAD APPEARED HOPEFUL SOLUTION POSSIBLE IN NEXT FEW MINTHS AND ASKED ROWLING WHETHER NEW ZEALAND WOULD ALSO GO ALONG.

3. ROWLING SAID USG ASSUMPTION OF UNLIMITED LIABILITY WHICH HE AND AMBASSADOR SELDEN HAS DISCUSSED AT SOME LENGTH A WEEK EARLIER WAS SIGNIFICANT AND GNZ IS TAKING ANOTHER LOOK. HE HAD ASKED FOR WORKING LEVEL REPORT WHICH NOT YET RECEIVED. HE WOULD DISCUSS WITH CABINET AND ALSO NEXT WEEK WITH AUSTRALIAN PRIMIN WHITLAM, SINCE NZ WOULD WISH TO FIND COMMON GROUNDS WITH AUSTRALIA ON THIS SUBJECT.

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4. ROWLING WENT ON TO SAY THAT NZ PUBLIC DOES NOT

DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN NUCLEAR PROPULSION AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND WAS STRONGLY OPPOSED TO LATTER. US UNWILLINGNESS TO CONFIRM OR DENY PRESENCE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS ON SHIPS THUS ADDED TO DIFFICULTIES OF NPW VISITS. NEVERTHELESS, NZ ACCEPTED WILLINGLY AND GLADLY ANZUS SHIELD, SO NZ HAD TO BEAR OBLIGATIONS TOO. NEW ZEALAND COULD NOT HAVE PROTECTION OF ANZUS WITHOUT RESPONSIBILITIES AS WELL. ON OTHER HAND, ACCORDING TO PRIMIN, WHEN ANZUS TREATY ENTERED INTO THERE HAD BEEN NO NUCLEAR IMPLICATIONS.

5. CLEMENTS SAID HE WAS SURPRISED TO HEAR QUESTION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS NOW ADDED TO PROBLEM OF LIABILITY AS REASON FOR HOLDING UP NPW VISITS. WE HAD BEEN TOLD PROBLEM WAS LIABILITY AND WE HAD GONE TO SOME TROUBLE TO CURE THIS PROBLEM. IF NEW ZEALAND NOW RAISED NUCLEAR WEAPON QUESTION AS CONDITION THIS WOULD MEAN NO PROGRESS SINCE USG COULD NOT DEPART FROM NEITHER CONFIRM NOR DENY POLICY. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE HAD NOT HAD OPPORTUNITY TO CHECK THE HISTORY OF NEW ZEALAND'S BAN ON NPW VISITS BUT AGREED THAT IF BAN WAS STRICTLY BASED ON LIABILITY QUESTION, THEN USG CASE WAS CERTAINLY STRENGTHENED.

6. MORE FUNDAMENTALLY, CLEMENTS CONTINUED, ACTIONS SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN UNILATERALLY WHICH WOULD CHANGE STRATEGIC BALANCE BETWEEN US AND SOVIET UNION ON WHICH RESTS BASIS FOR SALT AND OTHER ARMS CONTROL NEGOTIATIONS. US IS PROCEEDING IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS WITH SAME BASIC OBJECTIVES AS GNZ HAS, BUT ANY UNILATERAL DESTABILIZING OF SITUATION WILL WEAKEN, NOT STRENGTHEN FACTORS FOR SUCCESSFUL AGREEMENT.

7. ROWLING REPLIED THAT HE WAS ENCOURAGED BY SALT PROGRESS BUT FACT WAS MASSIVE NUCLEAR ARMAMENTS REMAINED. NEW ZEALAND WAS NOT DISCRIMINATING AGAINST U.S. NPWS; UK SHIPS HAD ALSO BEEN REFUSED AND SO WOULD ANY OTHERS THAT ASKED. NZ PUBLIC OPINION WAS STRONGLY AGAINST ANYTHING NUCLEAR-CONNECTED. THIS HAD BEEN SHOWN IN MATTER OF FRENCH NUCLEAR TESTS AND PROBLEM EXISTS IN PRIMIN'S OWN PARTY RANKS (LABOUR), AS WELL AS PUBLIC IN GENERAL.

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8. IN REPLY TO CLEMENT'S QUESTION WHETHER GNZ WOULD PUSH FOR SOUTH PACIFIC NUCLEAR FREE ZONE (SPNFZ), ROWLING SAID HIS PARTY HAD CONSISTENTLY AND OFTEN ADVOCATED THIS AND COULD NOT BACK AWAY FROM IT. HE WAS ACUTELY AWARE OF IMPLICATIONS OF NZ PAINTING ITSELF INTO A CORNER BUT AS A POLITICIAN HE WAS BOUND TO CARY OUT WHAT HE FEELS TO BE WISHES OF PARTY AND NATION. HE ENVISAGED NUCLEAR-FREE ZONE AS COMING IN STAGES, WITH FIRST STAGE LIMITED TO TERRITORY

AND TERRITORIAL WATERS OF PARTIES. AMBASSADOR SELDEN ASKED IF THIS WOULD MEAN THAT NO U.S. WARSHIPS WOULD BE ABLE TO ENTER NZ WATERS AND PORTS. ROWLING CONFIRMED THIS IS WHAT SPNFZ COULD MEAN IF SUCH A PROPOSAL IS EVENTUALLY ADOPTED. CLEMENTS NOTED IT MADE NO SENSE FOR NZ TO EXPECT US NUCLEAR SHIELD IF IT EXCLUDED US SHIPS PROVIDING SUCH SHIELD. ROWLING REPLIED THAT NUCLEAR SHIELD HAD NOT BEEN CONDITION FOR CONCLUSION ANZUS TREATY.

9. CLEMENTS INDICATED THAT IMPLICATIONS OF WHAT PRIMIN HAD SAID WERE SERIOUS. ROWLING SEEMED TO BE SAYING THAT NZ ELECTORATE WOULD HAVE TO MAKE A NEW EVALUATION OF THE BASIC NEED FOR ANZUS TREATY, WITH ITS OBLIGATIONS AS WELL AS SECURITY PROTECTION. ROWLING ANSWERED THAT THIS WAS CORRECT BUT HE DID NOT THINK IT WAS A BAD THING. THE PEOPLE WOULD HAVE TO ASK THEMSELVES AND DECIDE WHAT IT WAS THEY REALLY WANTED. DURING VIETNAM WAR SOME WHO OPPOSED WAR HAD FELT THAT THIS HAD TO CAUSE A FUNDAMENTAL BEARK WITH US, BUT ROWLING AND HIS COLLEABUES HAD SAID THIS WAS NOT SO, THAT NZ AND US COULD DISAGREE ON A PARTICULAR COURSE OF ACTION WITHOUT DISRUPTING OVERALL COOPERATION BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES. HE STILL FELT THIS WAS SO AND THAT NZ PEOPLE COULD CONSIDER AND DECIDE ON SECURITY RELATIONSHIPS WITHOUT DAMAGING NZ-US CORDIAL RELATIONS.

10. CLEMENTS AGREED GOOD FRIENDS COULD SURVIVE DIFFERENCES OF OPINION BUT REITERATED ROWLING SEEMED TO BE IMPLYING FUNDAMENTAL REASSESSMENT OF VALUE TO NEW ZEALAND OF US SECURITY TIES.

11. EMBASSY COMMENT: ON AFTERNOON OF MARCH 19 AMBASSADOR SELDEN MET WITH MFA PERMANENT SECRETARY CORNER SEEKING TO CLARIFY JUST WHAT PM HAS IN MIND REGARDING SPNFZ.

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CORNER, WHO HAD SPOKEN TO ROWLING SHORTLY BEFORE, SAID THAT GNZ IS CONSIDERING THE INTRODCION OF A DECLARATION OF INTENT AT THE UNGA IN SEPTEMBER CONCERNING ESTABLISHMENT OF NUCLEAR FREE ZONE IN SOUTH PACIFIC. CONCEPT WOULD BE ALONG THE LINES OF THE TLATELOCO TREATY AND WOULD CALL FOR BANNING THE EMPLANTING OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS ON THE LAND AND TERRITORIAL WATERS OF SAIGNATORS. THE RIGHT OF FREE TRANSIT ACCORDING TO CORNER WOULD NOT BE INVOLVED. MATTER IS TO BE DISCUSSED BETWEEN ROWLING AND PRIMIN WHITLAM LATER THIS WEEK IN CANBERRA. AS SOON AS CORNER RETURNS FROM CANBERRA (HE WILL ACCOMPANY ROWLING) HE WILL ISCUSS AUSTRALIAN REACTION WITH AMBASSADOR AND PROVIDE A COPY OF THE PROPOSAL. DURING CONVERSATION CORNER EMPHASIZED THAT USG WILL BE FULLY CONSULTED.

12. ADDITIONAL COMMENT: THE MATTER OF SPNFZ IS, AS ROWLING ACKNOWLEDGES, LARGELY DOMESTIC POLITICAL MATTER. THE SUBJECT WAS A KIRK FAVORITE (BUT NOT REALLY A MATTER OF GREAT CONCERN TO MAJORITY OF LABOUR PARTY DESPITE WHAT PM AVERS). ROWLING AND HIS PRAGMATIC FOLLOWERS ARE RUNNING INTO IDEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS WITHIN THE PARTY WHICH SPILLED ONTO FRONT PAGES OF LOCAL PAPER MARCH 18. KIRK FOLLOWERS ACCUSE ROWLING OF DEPARTING FROM SOCIALIST, HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES THAT THEY ALLEGE BROUGHT BABOUR TO POWER IN 1972. UNLESS ROWLING TURNS THE TIDE, KIRK FOLLOWERS CAN PROBABLY EXPECT INCREASING SUPPORT FROM OTHERS IN PARTY. WITH PARLIAMENT TO OPEN IN FEW WEEKS, THE LABOUR PARTY AND FEDERATION OF LABOUR ANNUAL CONVENTIONS DUE IN MAY, AND NATIONAL ELECTIONS LOOMING IN NOVEMBER, ROWLING SEES HIS FIRST AND FOREMOST TASKS TO BE CONSOLIDATING AND STRENGTHENING HIS LEADERSHIP AND ESTABLISHING SOLIDARITY WITHIN THE LABOUR PARTY. AS ONE TACTIC TO ACCOMPLISH THIS WE BELIEVE THAT OVER NEXT FEW WEEKS AND MONTHS ROWLING WILL PUBLICLY SUPPORT OR PAY TRIBUTE TO SOME OF KIRK'S PET PROJECTS. THESE INCLUDE FLOATING CONCEPT OF SPNFZ AS CALLED FOR IN 1972 LABOUR PARTY MANIFESTO.

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NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED ABOVE ADDRESSEES.

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